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ABSTRACT

Thousands of children run away from home or placements each year. The many programs for these children require evaluation to determine effectiveness; one runaway program for at-risk children is examined here. It was felt that if the runaway youth could receive some counseling, then it might help these children and families to solve some of their problems and cut down on running away. Face-to-face and phone interviews were conducted to determine the best methods for reaching these youth. Four primary approaches were chosen as methods to access these youth and their families. The first strategy involved setting up life-skill groups that would teach these children to handle themselves and their emotions. The second strategy used the municipal courts for those who refused the services offered to them through the program. The third design centered on advertising the program through visits to schools and agencies, using television and radio, and other forms of communication. Open lines of communication, between this program and other agencies involved with children, was chosen as a path to resolve problems experienced in helping these children. Implications of the study are discussed. (RJM)

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Defining Strategic Methods with which to Access Runaway Youth into a Runaway Program

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by

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Cohort 74R

A Practicum Report to the
Master's Program in Life Span Care, and Adminstration
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the degree of Master of Science

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

1996

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Authorship Statement

I hereby testify that this paper and the work it reports are entirely my own. Where it has been necessary to draw from the work of others, published or unpublished, I have acknowledged such work in accordance with accepted scholarly and editorial practice. I give testimony freely, out of respect for the scholarship of other workers in the field and in hope that my own work, presented here, will earn similiar respect.

November 25, 1996 — Date

Sheldon Bray MS — Signature of Student

Abstract

Defining strategic methods with which to access runaway youth into a runaway program. Bray, Sheldon E., 1996: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Masters Program in Life Span and Administration. Descriptors: Runaway Youth/Boys and Girls Runaway Programs/ Status Offenders/ Adolescents/Juvenile Probation/ Intra Agency Cooperation/ Counseling Group/Individual/Accessing the Court System/Program Advertising/Parent/Child Relationships/School Relationships Police/Juvenile Detention.

Thousands of children run away from home or placements each year. There are runaway programs all throughout the U. S. Runaway programs are usually voluntary. The author examined a runaway program for at-risk children in the Southwest part of the U.S. This program tripled the number of runaway youth it served, because it was determined that all runaway youth would access this program. Since programs for these children are voluntary, many youth do not use these services. It became evident that the same thing was occurring in this program, too.

The author determined to develop strategies for accessing these youth into this program that served runaway children. Research was done on different methods or strategies that had provided an avenue for these children and their families into other similar programs. Interviews were conducted with other runaway program in the same state to help determine successful methods of intervention.

Strategies were developed through interviews and discussions with other agencies. There were four primary approaches that were chosen as methods used to access these youth and their families.

The first strategy involved setting up life-skill groups that would address some topics that might help these children handle themselves and their emotions more effectively. The second strategy involved accessing the municipal courts for those children and families that refused services offered to them through this program. These youth were those who had run several times. The third design centered in on advertising the program through visits to schools and agencies, using television and radio, and printing handout material for public awareness.

Finally, open lines of communication between this program and other agencies involved with children was chosen as an path to working out any problems experienced in accessing these children through it. The final part of the paper pertained to recommendations and future plans for further research in the area of runaway youth.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The setting in which the problem occurs

The setting is a private non-profit agency in Texas, which has been serving families and children since 1966. Until 1990, the agency in this setting served girls only. In 1990, the name of the agency was changed because of the fact that we began to serve more families, as well as boys. The agency is multi-faceted in its approach to the community. Group foster care was begun in 1966 for girls and exists to this day. Both long-term residential psychiatric and short term emergency acute care is provided by the agency for boys and girls, ages 10-17. Children in abusive and neglectful homes are serviced by in-home intensive social workers who intervene with training and supervision of these families, hopefully keeping these families intact and functioning in a healthy manner at the end of this service. The agency offers a family-based service which helps families who are at-risk of abusing or neglecting their children of getting services so that this does not occur again. Also, there is a crisis nursery offered through our agency that provides short term emergency care for parents that may need short-term separation from their children, such as hospitalization of the parent or respite care from a demanding child, etc. Finally, the agency runs a program called STAR-Services to At Risk youth. This service provides counseling and guidance to children who are status offenders. Status offenders are those youth who commit offenses that are not chargeable in court. The majority of these youth are the

runaways, truants, and children with family problems. This is the service that I am currently supervising.

The STAR program is funded by the state in which we live. Our agency runs the homeless and runaway program that has serviced the community since 1983. In this program we offer 24 hour on-call crisis intervention (we have a toll-free 800 number for these runners), intensive individual and group counseling, mentoring, emergency placements for these types of children and skills-based training for parents and children. We can give the child up to ninety days of service a year with an extension if needed. When a child voluntarily enters this program, they first meet with an intake worker who obtains the family history of that family, discusses concerns about the child, and schedules five free counseling sessions with trained master's licensed therapists for the family and individual. Occasionally, emergency placement is granted by myself, as director of STAR, for the child that needs placement due to parent or child concerns. This service is offered only if there are emergency needs that require placement for the child. The key to this service is the cooperation of the parent and the child. If we place the child in the shelter, the parents must agree to counseling and availability to the STAR worker assigned to this case.

Contract supervisors recognized that the STAR program in this agency had 83.6% of the youth served by this agency that did not run away again following services (six months), as compared to the state average for similar problems of only 70.2%. The same survey showed that 74% of our families reported that their situation was better off following our services, as compared with 62.9% of other

runaway programs around the state. In 1995, a record 706 youths were reported as having committed a status offense (runaway and truant). In 1995, changes occurred in the Texas Family Code that would soon affect our STAR program.

No longer were these youths picked up for those offenses and transported to detention (usually, for 24 hours). They would still be picked up by the police, but instead of ending time at the detention center, they would be released to the parent(s). This was a potential problem, for there was none, except the police officer, to do intervention or offer services to this runaway child and their family. To combat this problem, the state set up the First Offender program (January 1996) to help reduce the number of youths whose behavior could escalate into more crime or reduce those behaviors could be placing them in dangerous situations by their behavior. This program fulfilled two ways to help change behaviors of these youth. The first way was one that allowed a child who had a first offense (misdemeanor only, non-drug related) to be given a chance to get this "first offense" taken off his or her permanent police record if the youth will follow the guidelines of this program and complete all the requirements of the program. The juvenile board in our city detemined that our the FO program would serve those youth who did not commit a state jail felony or misdemeanor involving violence to a person or the use of a firearm, knife or club, also, no drug and alchohol related crimes will be worked through this program(see appendix A). There are several state jail felonies that qualify for the FO offender program (see appendixB). While it has not been determined what state jail felonies we will serve, it was decided that we would serve all B and C misdemeanors (see appendix B). Failure to do this would result in that misdemeanor being put on that child's record

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permanently, community service for that child and a monetary fine. The second way gave the status offender (runners, truant) an avenue to change their behavior through individual and family counseling, as well as try to meet other needs of these children, in the hope that this intervention could help a child to make better choices in the future. The First Offender program services include crisis intervention, emergency short-term residential care children (ages 10-17), family counseling, parenting training skills, youth coping skills, advocacy training for parents and youth, and role modeling.

The client flow is monitored by the local law enforcement with a referral to the probation department either for referral to our agency's First Offender program,or from the local law enforcement, directly to the program. The determining factor will be the type of crime committed, the judgment of the law enforcement officer and the agreement ultimately reached between the agency and the local probation department and Juvenile Board. The agreement we have with the Juvenile Board includes meeting the needs of children who are runners, those with truant problems at school, and those that receive misdemeanors' offenses (petty theft, criminal mischief, etc.) The program works like this:

1. Every week, the officer that supervises the youth division of our local law enforcement sends us 20-30 First Offender information sheets that show the name of the child, the date of the offense, type of offense committed, the address of the child and the phone number(if any).

2. We receive this sheet and attempt to contact the family by phone. We attempt to contact the family 2-3 times by phone. Currently, we are unable to

spare a worker to visit the address of those children without phones.

3. If we are unable to contact the parent or child, we will send them a letter that offers them our services and reminds them that this case will be referred back to the police or juvenile authorities. If we have not received a reply, we will refer the case back to the juvenile authorities.

4. Through a truant officer, children, because of school problems, are also eligible for First Offender services.

5. All of these children are given a sheet of paper from the police, juvenile probation or the sheriff's department, stating that they are required to call the agency under the First Offender act and set up a time to meet with one of the three intake workers that they meet in the initial intake.

6. The First Offender program allows the child(and their family) some counseling, both family and individual. If the child with a misdemeanor offense is able to complete this program(five therapy sessions), our agency will send notification of this completion to the police or probation department. Once these departments are given this notification, they will initiate a process that will erase this offense from this "first offender" record. If a child refuses this program, their case will be turned back to one of these departments and the child will be adjudicated and sentenced, keeping the criminal charge on his record for the rest of his life.

7. If a runaway is picked up by the police and they are unable to contact the parent(s), they are to transport the child to our agency's short term acute care unit. At that point, the STAR worker on call will be contacted and will attempt to locate the parents of this child. Usually the parents are able to come

within a few hours of the call and pick up their child. At that time, they are encouraged to contact our agency for free counseling sessions to hopefully insure that this child will not run again. If the parent has not picked up their child within 24 hours, our agency will contact Child Protective Services (CPS) to file abandonment on the parents. At that point, a CPS worker will become involved in this child's welfare.

9. When a child participates in our program, they are assessed by one of our STAR workers and must complett an intake process.

a. a complete intake form is finished
b. get complete school and law enforcement history
c. determine eligibility criteria
d. determine program components with which to refer
e. develop a service plan and agreement
f. get parent(s) and youth to sign agreement
g. set deadline for completion
h. set return appointment

Our agency has been working with the police department, juvenile probation and the truancy offices for several years. There have been times that problems have arisen between these agencies and my agency, yet, they have been worked out and usually have to do with what services are needed to best serve a family or child. We are currently under some pressure to ensure that we serve as many families and children as is possible. Both the police department and juvenile probation are telling us that we are not aggressively pursuing these youth and families. Because of this feeling, it is felt by these two departments that we are letting children

"slip through the cracks" and become lost in the system.

The student's role in the setting:

I am currently in the position of supervisor of the Star program for two cities. As the supervisor of this program, I am responsible for the hiring of workers, insuring that all STAR policies and procedures are followed by the workers. Since the program is funded by a contract, there are certain restrictions that apply to making changes in the program. I am able to make some changes in the way we accomplish the STAR policies. I am in the process of developing some group topics for these children that will help in meeting their specific needs.

I am allowed to make changes in the program, providing I inform my supervisor of these changes. I am allowed to run my program the way I want to as long as program changes are first discussed with my supervisor. My experience working with children and families comes primarily from a residential perspective. I initially worked in a short and long term residential treatment center starting in 1986 and moved to this agency I work with now in 1990. I have spent the last five years working in a crisis intervention, acute care setting (the assessment center that is mentioned in this paper) with boys and girls, ages 8-17. I have worked with families in that time period also. Since I have worked with many runaway youth , I feel that this helps me understand why children exhibit these types of behavior. This experience has proven to be beneficial in helping to understand what are the problems with this program, including why children sometimes react to situations as they do when under crisis or pressure from family problems.

Chapter II: The problem

Problem Statement:

The STAR program in this West Texas town offers free services to those youth who are running away from home ,truant from school, and having family problem. Thomas (1976), in a study on status offenders, found that when runners were added to the status offender mix, 50% or more were referred three or more times to the juvenile system (p. 440) Due to changes in juvenile law, all runners in this city are being referred to this agency for counseling. Since January 1996, the bulk of the clients this program has served were runaway youth (70%). The program is voluntary. Many of the youth (and their families) who are eligible for this program are not accessing this program that is offered to them. These runaway youth are having family or personal problems that are causing them to make the decision to run. The STAR program could address some of those needs through counseling sessions. The purpose of this practicum is to determine ways or avenues to encourage these youth and their families to use this valuable service.

Documentation of the problem:

It is important to state why it benificial for runaway youth to use services designated for them. There is some literature to support the fact that runaway

youth have concerns and problems that could be solved if they would access the runaway programs. Nye and Edelbroock mention that running away is a symptom of more serious issues (1980). Cohen and Van houten (1991), in completing a study comparing runaway youth with non-runaway youth stated that runaways are at greater risk than non-runaway youth to experience drug use, prostitution, and sexual abuse(p. 821). Other articles mention that running away can be a sign that there are serious problems in the home that could be addressed by counselors if there was a way to guide these children and their families into runaway programs (Crespi and Sabatelli (1993), Miller et al. (1990), Palenski and Launer (1987), and Janus et al. (1987)) Wittenberg (1988) acknowledged that family problems were a valid warning that a student may be at risk (p. 10). It is necessary to inform the reader that the author's research uncovered many articles stating that services were needed for runaway and homeless youth. However, there were few articles pertaining to programs that acknowledged that their program was not reaching these runaway youth in large numbers. Much was written on what runaway programs offered yet few articles succinctly informed the reader that these programs were not accessing these runaway youth.

Currently. we receive 20-30 cases weekly referred to us by the police department. Seventy percent of these "status offenders" are reports of runaway youth. As stated in chapter 1, the STAR program is expected to get these youth and their families into the program with an initial intake and during the intake 5 free sessions of counseling by licensed , master's level therapists are offered to the client, free of charge. Studies in our agency have shown that our program

recidivism rate is low for repeat offenders after the counseling sessions. Shane (1989) did a study on patterns of runaway and homeless youth and discovered that there was a need for support services for families under stress and difficulty (p. 213). Children and families are called by us on the phone letting the families know that they were referred to our program by the police department. At that time, we offer our serviceswhich include free counseling, plus free access to our other services if needed. Despite the fact that the STAR program has experienced a low recidivism rate of repeat offenses by those who access our program, we are having difficulty drawing in these youth and families . Of these runaway youth, 60% are not accessing our services. Other runaway programs have seen that these youth do not access our services despite the fcat that there are services ther form them. Runaway and Youth Centers (RHYC) in four different sites nationally were polled, and it was found that there were many youth that did not access these services in spite of the clear access and free nature of these programs and it was determined that the public did not know of all the services for which they were eligible (Cohen, 1991). Pires et al. (1991) studied seven successful runaway programs in the natio,n and reported that one program had" rap groups" and peer counseling, yet only 10% of the youth served(650) who used these services were runaway youth (p. 47). Several sources within the agency and out of the agency recognize that there are many youth who are not using our services. The STAR contract manager of our region has noticed an increase in the runaway youth that we serve. She is currently questioning whether we are able to serve these numbers of youth. The local law enforcement agency has noticed

that there are several referrals sent back to the police, showing that we have not been able to access the bulk of the runaway youth to our program. My workers and myself have noted the difficulty in reaching those youth without phones and those who are not receptive to using our services. It is important to reach these youth before they run again. Stewart (1986) acknowledged that when there was no crisis intervention for these youth, recidivism numbers rose (p. 78). Benda (1987) studied recidivism among status offenders in Wisconsin and discovered that the children of families who had no place to turn to for help experienced a 33% return to the justice system, while some of them were convicted of a felony as an adult. It is estimated now that we are able to only reach one out of three clients referred.

Analysis of the Problem:

1. The courts do not allow for status offender. While talking with the assistant director of juvenile probation, it was explained to me that the juvenile board decided to take the status offender away from juvenile probation and contract services to these children out side the department, because of the increasing number of youth they are require to adjudicate(these being the more serious crimes,i.e., felonies, assault). Law enforcement was asked to find an agency that they could contract to do these services and our agency was chosen because the STAR program was already in existence dealing with this type of youth. We already had the counseling set up and readily accessible. The hope

was that we could access those runaway youth and get them counseling, thus keeping them from running again and possibly committing a chargeable offense. This would require juvenile probation to take the child to court, a problem that already exists. A major problem with the classification of this offender is that they are not charged with any crime and most services that they can access are done voluntarily on their part. In this state, we are moving into an era of getting tougher with our youth and as a result, the more difficult child is accessed into Child Protective Services (CPS). This translates into the idea that less difficult children will not be served by the juvenile system unless they are in imminent danger. Texas (1985) went through a similar period in which juvenile state agencies would not deal with a runaway unless they were in immediate physical danger unless he or she had been abused (p. 16). Law enforcement agencies in some states don't seek out these youth unless there is reason to suspect foul play (1985; p. 17). We cannot order these children to become involved in our program, because these are status offenders and cannot be court ordered to appear. Some people want us to act as a probation department and aggressively pursue these status offenders with threats of involvement by police or probation. One problem we have as an agency is one of having no way to roder or force these children in our program. Secondly, we are known as a family organization, not the probation department.

2. We have tripled our number of clients since the implementation of the First Offender Program. Studies show that there are vast numbers of runners out there that need service but don't use them. Rohr and James (1994) report

that while 146,000 runners used runaway programs and shelters, that was a small percentage of those accessing services of the 2 million runners that year (p. 44). This has become a staffing issue. We are needing to streamline services to these clients to speed up the intake process for these youth. Another problem associated with these numbers is the fact that we typically get the report on the runaway child one to two weeks after the run occurred.

3. Because the state juvenile board has decided not to handle status offenders, the juvenile detention center in our town can no longer detain the status offenders, and there is no juvenile probation department to tell the children that they must attend these sessions at the STAR program, unless they have committed a minor misdemeanor offense that requires court action. Through our current STAR program, we can use the assessment center to keep these youth for only a short term stay and this shelter now services a population area of over 100,00 people. In a study of several federally supported centers, it was reported that it was difficult to find satisfactory solutions to the runners problems. for they are alone and without resources and they need a program outside the justice system while making it capable of triggering health and other social services for these children and their families (General Accounting office: 1983; p. 12). Our agency can provide shelter care on a limited basis (an average of 5-10 days for emergency placement). Also, our shelter services are contingent on parental consent to work with us and the child at the shelter. There is a misconception that the child will go to the assessment center to be "taught a lesson". Many of these parents want us to deal with their child, yet are not willing to participate in

counseling. This attitude often results in the release of the child back to the parent because of lack of cooperation on their part.

4. The youth in our city are not aware of the services offered to them. After talking with some schools , it was discovered that there was little literature and few phone numbers or posters that discussed our program. Benda (1987) acknowledged that runaway youth were not always aware of services open to them and did not always trust mental health professionals, which caused them to bypass programs (p. 44).

5. There is not a full spirit of cooperation between the agencies that helped to design this program in the city. Nevergold(1983) stated that there was little cross-agency planning for a range of services for runaway youth and their families between the juvenile courts and other agencies (p. 47). There were some services promised that we have not been able to provide, either because of funding cuts or under planning for the extra numbers of youth accessing our program. Also, the agencies in the city that hope for the program to be a success are expecting us to provide aggressive, increased referral numbers that they did not experience when they dealt with the runaway youth.

6. Finally , the schools and the public do not know about our program. Many schools must deal with the runaway youth in a timely manner. Post Kammer and Schmidt (1987) stated that only a fraction of the runaway population received shelter care or related services that were open to them (p. 149). Post and McCoard (1994) acknowledged that it is essential that school counselors follow up on the runaway youth to reduce the stresses that could ena up in future runs (p. 213). Many principals and counselors with years of service in the schools in

which they work have very little knowledge of the STAR/FO program. It is important that other agencies and institutions know about our services because traditional methods of dealing with these youth sometimes are not the answer. The state of Illinois (1984) acknowledged that treatment of these runaway youth was difficult and traditional methods might not work with them (p. 5). It must be added that the Child Protective Services (CPS)in our town has little e knowledge of this programas well. With little knowledge of the program citywide, we have fewer opportunities for families to access our services.

Chapter III: Goals and objectives

The following goals and objectives were devised after an in-depth analysis of different programs and institutions that served runaway youth and the different ways and methods that were successful and unsuccessful in inducing these youth into these programs. A literature review was done and different approaches to these problems were examined. The purpose of these goals and objectives was to determine ways to encourage these runaway youth to use the services of the runaway program and strengthen the program by providing avenues for this type of youth to access the program, as well as, allowing others to become aware of what this runaway program offers to these youth.

Goal 1: In the time frame allowed, new(to the program) ways or techniques were to be implemented to access these runaway youth into the runaway program.

Objectives:

1. During the 10 week implementation period, at least three avenues of accessing these youth were to be developed or added onto the existing STAR program. It is hoped that these new methods would attract clients into our program. It has been shown by literature that this is not an easy accomplishment. This goal is crucial to encouraging these youth into this program. These additions were to occur in the STAR/FO program bringing

in these new avenues or paths to accessing runaway youth during the ten week period.

2. I t is expected that at least one of these methods of attracting runaway children into our program was to be set in motion at the end of or during the ten week information gathering period.

Goal 2: There were to be avenues of communication established by which agencies involved with the runaway program would have a greater awareness of the runaway program; its strengths and its limitations and a way to set up dialogue between agencies These agencies would include but not be limited to the police department(the youth division), juvenile probation, child protective services, etc.

Objectives:

1. It was the purpose of this objective to determine ways to open communication lines to the other agencies that access our programs. The attitudes of some agencies were targeted in that therewere to be ways sought to network toward the goal of meeting the needs of these runners. The city in which the agency is located would be the target of this objective in that all the agencies involved are located in the city itself. By the end of the 10 week practicum period, lines of communication would firmly established so that information could run to and from the FO program to other agencies.

2. At least 4 agencies or organizations were to be designated as agencies

that would require regular lines of communication. These agencies were chosen to better guarantee that there would be a place to discuss concerns and suggestions that would benifit the smoother running of the runaway program, helping to insure access of runaway youth into the STAR program.

3. Education of STAR services to schools and other agencies were attempted by meeting with agencies involved. It was expected that least 50% of the schools in town were contacted and introduced to our program in Abilene so that the runaway youths and their families were aware of the services we offer. Rohr and James (1994) suggested that schools were an ideal place to advocate for the child and could be a go-between the child and the agency. This will be accomplished in the city's schools as well as other agency offices. By the end of the 10 week period, these schools were to be aware of our services.

Chapter IV: Solution strategy

Review of existing models and approaches:

A comprehensive review of the literature was conducted in an attempt to understand the various avenues that were pursued trying to get these youth into runaway programs and school programs that dealt with at-risk children. Also, reading material was examined that discussed possible methods to encourage youth to access programs that were open to them and to address programs that were not successful in attracting these youth. Since it was rare to find specific runaway programs that addressed this issue, other related programs(at-risk youth programs, law enforcement programs, school programs) were looked at to determine if the reading material was suitable for reference sources for this practicum. Finally, there were several articles that offered suggestions on what should be done to access these runaway youth. There were several different paths to encouraging these youth into programs that could help them solve their problems or, at least, cope better. Each avenue will be discussed briefly.

1. Runaway shelters:

Many authors advocated use of runaway shelters to access runaway youth. Nevergold(1983) advocated the use of runaway shelters because they had 1) a 50% nationwide record of returning children to their families and 2) these shelters were non-coercive and because of this able to retain youth because the placement

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was voluntary (p. 60). She also alluded to the fact that accessibility for the child on the run was not always possible for the services needed (1983; p. 11). Rohr and James (1994) looked at shelters as a means for temporary placement until a means to get the child back home was finalized (p. 44). They also advocated residential treatment if needed (p. 43). Cohen did suggest, however, that runaway shelters were not used as much as they could be due to lack of awareness to a program or mistrusting of mental health professionals (p. 44). Speck et al. (1988) said that a stay at a runaway shelter for two weeks increased the effectiveness of the shelter by cutting down on the recidivism rate among runners, suggesting that a child may need placement into the shelter for there to be a greater success rate of the child going back to their home. Cohen (1980) and Rohr (1984) both mentioned use of "safe houses" where runaways could stay for a few days until they could be transported to a runaway shelter or decide to go back home. Conversely, Cohen (1980) found that youth would use the services of the shelter, but did not usually take advantage of after-care services. Also, the author found that runaway shelters were often in remote areas, away from transportation and easy visibility (p. 17). This hindered access to these shelters.

2. Counseling, individual and group:

Counseling is advocated for runaway children whenever possible. Traditional methods of treatment appeared not to appeal to the runners. Jennings (1990) published a practicum dealing with increasing minority youth in a crisis intervention program and found that one had to spend time helping the client overcome the fear

of seeking help from a human service agency (p. 22). Pires et al. (1991) suggested that the best type of counseling is non-traditional, problem-solving, goal directed and short term for it to be effective with runaway youth (p. 46). Rohr and James (1994) reported that you should engage parents of these children in counseling and strongly recommended that runaway programs should offer individual, group, and family counseling (p. 43). The STAR program mentioned in this practicum advocates counseling whenever possible and has shown statistically that runner recidivism decreases with counseling. Nevergold (1983) alluded to the fact that peer counseling, peer support groups, easy accessibility, and brief time periods were recommended for runaways. Stewart(1986) showed that crisis intervention counseling helped to drop recidivism numbers of runaways in Indiana (p. 78). When surveyed, what welfare practitioners felt was the best alternative to court involvement was individual and group counseling for status offenders (Russel and Sedlak; 1993; p. 17). The resources for runaway and missing children in Illinois (1984) suggested that there must be counseling for the returned runaway when problems which led to the running persist: if this does not occur, expect the child to repeat the run.

3. Schools:

An examination of literature demonstrated that schools were well aware of the runaway problem and attempted to address this issue. Once again, Nevergold (1983) said that schools should provide courses on parenting, including interpersonal communication skills with widespread application to all students. Post and McCoard (1994) surveyed 76 runaway youth and found that the

most consistent need they asked was for help with having a better living situation at home (p. 214). In Alaska, some childcare leaders opted for using the schools to provide mentoring programs and other older youth as counselors to meet the growing need of these runaway youth (Alaska, 1988). Post Kammer and Schmidt (1987) recommended that schools establish support groups that can teach coping skills and provide a sense of belonging for the runaway adolescent (p. 154). They also advised that the local schools should have local and national runaway hot-line numbers available on a printed card that the students can pick up and carry out (1987; p. 43). Finally, Roid (1987) advocated using parent trainers who would contact parents experiencing difficulties with their children and schools (p. 87).

4. Juvenile court:

While surveying article on status offenders and juvenile courts, a variety of responses were documented about these youth and meeting their needs. Stewart (1986) said that the juvenile court could take status offenders and 1) dismiss them 2) refer them to an appropriate agency and 3) have a detention hearing by making families aware of non-legal action as counseling and informal adjustments(unofficial probation) (p. 78). He found that crisis intervention was more effective than unofficial probation in reducing recidivism among these youth, and the goal of this crisis intervention program was to keep the status offender out of the courts (p. 79). Goldmeier and Dean (1973) suggested that there was a greater tendency for these youth to turn toward their peers than to teachers, parents or ministers when in trouble (p. 543). Duva & Raley (1988) hinted that the legal approach did not always work with runaways because: 1. it was felt that the

law tended to be punitive rather than preventative, 2. the law operated only to force the runner back into a situation they found intolerable, driving the runner away from help rather than toward it (p. 41).

5. Law enforcement:

There was also literature written on how the police work with runners and status offenders. Elique (1984)referred to a law enforcement program in New York that tried to keep runners out of the juvenile system by having counseling teams of one police officer and a social worker that were trained to deal with runaways, meet the child at bus stations and try and get those children back in the home, offering counseling if needed. Maxson et al.(1988). suggested that shelter care and counseling services are there for police to use providing they view them as an appropriate placement for the runaway and missing child (p. 98).

6. Cooperation between agencies and communities:

Articles have addressed the need for cooperation between child welfare agencies, communities, law enforcement , and the courts. Wittenberg (1988) stated that characteristics of a successful school dropout program(which can lead to runaway behavior) included careful student selection and community involvement, using relevant topics and examples to teach basic life skills such as conflict management, and coping skills (p. 23). She also advocated integrating counseling into the academic program (p. 26). Wittenberg stated that an at-risk program will not be successful if they do not have a systematic way to identify youth-at-risk (p. 25). Nevergold (1983) reported that if there is no agency cross-planning for troubled youth and families, then there are voids in service to these families (p. 47). All

agencies involved in the STAR/FO program must pool their resources together to benifit the child.

7. Advertising:

While there were few articles written on advertising for a runaway program, some related articles in the child care field addressed this method of informing people of an agencies' services to the public. Jennings in a paper (1990), addressed the issue of informing the public or employees of services available to them. Jennings advocated using posters to promote AIDS awareness among workers and children and staff at a runaway shelter (p. 51). She also included newspaper articles, brochures, inviting leaders in the community for an open house, and having a community seminar to address your message to the community (p. 51). Sharlin et al. (1992), in writing about runaways and homeless youth, suggested that there be signs posted providing numbers and locations of assistance centers for these youth (p. 401). Rohr et al. (1994) suggested there are approaches that schools can take in accessing these runaway youths at school such as engaging parents in counseling "almost always" (p. 42). They also suggested that group counseling should be a necessity for re-entry back into school (p. 44). Herman (1989) proposed that one strategy to use was to inquire of others who lived in cities where similar programs were located (p. 4). It was suggested that people contact local businesses, contact elected officials, use media(phone, radio and television), contact church leaders, print promotional material, hand out buttons, balloons, have face to face communication, debates, meetings, forums, and seminars.

8. Other STAR agencies:

Many STAR programs in the state were contacted. It was found that they run their programs differently than the other STAR programs in the state. The rural agencies such as a STAR program in a rural area send their workers out to the homes. They have offices in all three counties. This agency works closely with CPS(Child Protective Services) and services almost 1000 clients in a given year. Most of their clients are self-referred. Individual and group therapy are offered to these children. One strength of their program is one of going to the homes and meeting these families where they are. In another STAR program in a non-rural area, the director mentioned that they "hit the schools hard". They have an agreement worked out with the schools in which they have groups in the schools offering topics such as conflict management skills, better communication, etc to these status offenders. They also advertise in the phone book and are often out in the public. In another STAR agency in the state, the superintendent of the schools there set up time for discussion groups to meet at school. Some of the topics they discuss include anger management and conflict resolution. Still another STAR program offered meals to youth to attend groups while a different STAR program offered $70 gift certificates if these youth finished 5 group sessions. All these programs agreed that it took cooperation between agencies to ensure that these children were accessed into programs. While in the state of California, the local CPS in a city of 600,000 people was called to discover how they accessed their runaway youth. The worker on the phone said that schools and law enforcement are taught about the program so that they can access it for their children. She said that there was some advertisement in the community

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about the program.

Proposed solution strategy:

After looking at literature concerning runaway youth and the different approaches that each agency or state agency has used in accessing these youth, it was decided that there would be two phases in accomplishing these goals. The first phase involved gathering of information on each of these goals by further research and by interview with other STAR agencies in the state. The primary method of collecting data was through a weekly journal kept by the author and notes would be taken when discussing methods of accessing these youth with other agencies and individuals during interviews and meetings.

In phase one, the author and some of the STAR workers would meet with other agency heads and school officials to discuss possible strategies to access youth

1. Initially more calls would be required to other STAR providers to view avenues they have chosen with which to access their runaway youth. These methods were be noted and documented for further use. During these discussions, topics would include successful and unsuccessful methods of accessing these children.
2. The STAR program in the state has shown that the program can be successful if the right methods are employed in the right areas.
    a. Discussion groups have helped many runaway youth in the various STAR programs.
    b. Incentives are usually built in to the program to encourage participation.

3. Meetings will be set up with local law enforcement to help better facilitate understanding of the STAR program and how the FO program fits into it. During these meetings(at least monthly) , discussions will center in on how well the program is operating in the city, and open the floor for suggestions to better improve the program itself so that law enforcement will look on it as a help not a "road block" to helping these kinds of youth.

4. There will be a joint meeting set up with the officer in charge of the local police's youth division, the Assistant director of the local juvenile probation, and a local CPS supervisor. During these meetings, runaway numbers will be discussed and suggestions on how the agencies involved in the FO program can work together (to help bring in greater numbers of youth), will be given during these meetings. Talks may be centered around accessing the municipal court to bring the chronic runner into services by court order during these meetings.

5. Weekly meetings will occur in which all STAR workers in the city will meet to discuss the program, and the author will solicit suggestions and recommendations for improvements in the FO program to allow for greater access to these runaway youth.

The second phase included the determination of which strategies to employ to reach each of the stated goals. During this second phase, the information was gathered and decisions were made as to which directions the program would move to better meet the runaway youth's needs. It was expected that 3 different ways to access youth were te be set in place either during the 10 week period or at the

end of that time.

1. To meet goal number one there were three strategies employed to better access runaway youth and their families.

a. At least one group would set up at various local schools or at our agency addressing six topics that would help youth to deal with issues at home. These topics were to include conflict resolution, anger management, making the right choice, the art of negotiation, and two more topics to be determined.

b. The municipal courts may be able to have access to multiple runners whose parents refuse to involve themselves in individual or group counseling. There were to be meetings set up with those who are knowlegeable about legal matters, in order to discuss the viability of this option. These parents will be given a warning to use FO resources after their child has run a set number of times, . If there are two more runs, then the parent will go before the judge and may go to jail for a number of days because they did not access services provided for them, as well as the child interred at the local juvenile detention center.

c. Advertising will be attempted in the local media, as well as accessing the schools with flyers , that talk about the program we offer. Pamphlets will be designed to advertise the STAR program in the city. On these pamphlets, phone numbers and addresses will be given. Posters will be made to be posted throughout the city. The author and the other STAR workers will speak at local Lions Clubs, colleges and other organizations about the

STAR/FO program and the benefits it provides our youth.

2. Monthly meetings between the agencies mentioned above would continue and a number of issues were to be worked on at that time such as: communication between agencies and insured that this continued monthly and dealt with problems in a timely fashion(within 24 hours), the author was to keep a journal of all interactions as to better facilitate the solving of potential problems. To ensure that these goals were accomplished, people who had been interviewed and asked for their opinions were to be re-interviewed to determine if they were pleased with the outcome of this study. It was hoped that there would be a 60% satisfaction rate by those interviewed at the end of the practicum. Those interviewed were to include those people who had been consulted on what ideas they have had about accessing the runaway youth. This survey would be given after the end of the ten week period.

Chapter V

Activities for the Practicum

A number of tasks were completed during the ten week implementation period of this practicum. There were two phases in the this solution strategy. The information gathering and the strategies decided for accessing the runaway youth were done by interviews over the telephone and with some face-to-face interviews. Some of the face-to-face meetings involved several people, while most of the meetings involved one on one sessions between the author and one or two administrators. These interviews were collected and written in a weekly log or journal that encompassed the ten week implementation period.

Phase one: the author and some of the STAR workers will be meeting with other agency heads and school officials to discuss possible strategies. This strategy was accomplished by the author and somewhat by the other STAR(Service To At Risk) youth workers. During the planning of the strategy session of the practicum, several changes were occurring within the program that were disruptive to the STAR program. These were program changes that were required by the STAR administrators in Austin, Texas. As a result, the work load increased and the three STAR workers expressed frustration about the continuing changes in the program. All three workers had their Masters in a therapy background. This proved to be a barrier to enlisting their aid in collecting data for the program. These workers would rather the program be run with a major emphasis on therapy

rather than a more social work approach. This attitude has been overcome somewhat by requiring them to go out to agencies and schools to inform these organizations about the services the STAR/FO(First Offender) program offers children and families in need. This was also done at their request in order for them to feel that they were involved in the process. As a result of these barriers, the author did much of the interviewing himself.

The first part of phase one was to visit or contact different STAR contractors in the state. There were several STAR contractors that were reached by phone(the driving distance was too far to meet face-face)and asked several questions pertaining to their STAR program. Three primary questions were asked that helped to determine the strategies that were decided in this practicum for accessing runaway youth: Who referred your clients into your program? Do you offer classes or groups to these youth and families? How did your agency inform the people of your town/county about the services your STAR program offered? Other questions asked included: How long have you been doing this contract? How many workers are involved in this program? How are your clients referred to you? how do you let the public know about your program? Do you go into the community to visit your clients? Do you go into the schools to tell about your program? Who counsels your clients?

An additional part of phase one was acknowledging that STAR programs were successful if they could access children into their program. There were several methods employed to encourage or compel children into these runaway programs.

Meetings were set up with local youth officers to reacquaint some of them with the STAR /FO program in the town. Positive accomplishments of the program(as well as concerns) were sought by the author about the STAR/FO program.

There were two meetings set up during the implementation process, including the local youth officer in charge of the juvenile division, the assistant director of juvenile probation in the city and the author. Topics were brought about the STAR program during one meeting. The other meeting served as a venue for discussing the runaway statistics for this STAR program. Some interesting findings came from that meeting that will be shared later in this report. Finally, weekly meetings were scheduled for the STAR workers and the supervisor(author) to discuss the program and communicate changes in the program as were called for. Some concerns surfaced that will be addressed later that came directly from these meetings.

Twelve STAR providers were contacted to provide information on their program: While many questions were asked about each program, three primary questions were asked:

How are these youth referred and through what source?

1. This program worked with expelled kids through the schools. They also received referrals through juvenile probation and a FO program.
2. This agency worked with juvenile probation.
3. Their referrals came through the schools and from juvenile probation(FO

program.

4. This program received their referrals through the police, truancy court, and municipal courts.
5. This contractor got referrals from the police, walk-ins, through the schools, and from the justice of the peace.
7. This provider secured youth through the schools, the courts, and juvenile probation.
8. Referrals came through Child Protective Services (CPS) and juvenile probation.
9. Children were referred through the juvenile courts and truancy courts.
10. These youth came in as self-referrals as well as,through CPS.
11. This program received runaway youth through juvenile probation, the police, and the schools.
12. This program survived on referrals through the schools.

Do you offer classes or groups for these clients?

1. They offered groups (drugs, sex, eating disorders, conflict management,) mentoring, after school programs, parenting groups, and grand-parenting groups.
2. This agency offered at risk groups at school.
3. This organization offered groups at schools.

4. This program provided parenting classes, TCADA(alcohol and drug programs) classes, and a 5 week program for at-risk kids(classes).
5. This provider offered counseling with licensed Masters level therapists, as well as offering classes on life skills.
6. This agency had life-skills groups at the schools.
7. Children were offered groups (life skills,anger management, etc.).
8. This agency went into homes to do counseling, offered use of a gymnasium, a a game room for children if they earned points from group, and multi-family groups.
9. This agency's strengths centered around the fact that they went into the homes to work with youth and families in their home environment.
10. Workers would go into homes and offer group counseling for youth.
11. This contractor offered groups in the school discussing topics such as anger management and how to make friends.
12. Finally, this program maintained groups in schools dealing with topics such as self-esteem and conflict resolution.

How did your agency inform the people of your town/county about the services your STAR program offered?

1. This agency used radio to advertise, word of mouth, and were present in the schools.
2. This contractor spent time one on one, had a booth at the local school

health fair, went to schools, talked with the principals and counselors, and went to superintendent meetings.

3. They advertised through the umbrella agency they were under using brochures and utilized one on one meetings.
4. This agency talked with store managers about programs for 7-9 year olds who shoplifted. They left brochures about their program wherever they could and informed other agencise about their program
5. This organization offered book covers for schools at the start of the year. They also provided counselors in five counties for the at-risk youth.
6. They spent much of their time interacting with other agencies.
7. This establishment met with other agencies.
8. This STAR contractor would throw small footballs to crowds at games , gave out brochures whenever possible and spent time with other agencies.
9. This agency would network with other agencies such as juvenile probation and the schools.
10. They would spend time with juvenile probation and the schools.
11. This agency worked with the school, providing discussion groups for children.
12. This contractor handed out brochures, listed their phone number in the phone book, and did Public Service Announcements (PSA's).

The STAR programs provided much direction and it was discovered that the majority of the new methods suggested to the author's STAR program came from the interviews of these programs. There were some other interesting facts about

these interviews:

1. The number one referral source for runaway youth was juvenile probation, with school being the second highest referral source.

2. Several STAR programs worked the FO program. Because of working the FO program, the courts were the third highest referral source.

3. When it was asked what the programs offered to children, the response was overwhelmingly group counseling or life skills groups. Parenting groups were rated third by these STAR providers as something that was offered to these runaway youth and families. Some of these programs had access to special programs such as use of a gym or karate classes for these children and their families. One program had access to a gym at their agency and would allow youth to use these facilities.

4. The last question asked was assumed by the author concurrent with the reading of materials in the previous chapters . This questions dealt with how the STAR program got information to the community about the organization. All STAR programs did some form of advertisement either by physically giving someone something that physically represented their program or by keeping lines of communication open with other agencies. Many of the programs discussed meeting with other agencies and keeping in contact with agencies that referred them clients. Other programs stressed the importance of maintaining a good relationship with these agencies. Others made public service announcements. In my agency, we had an article in the local newspaper about the STAR/FO program. In addition,last week one of the local television stations filmed a family discussing

their good experience with the STAR program. They also filmed one of the STAR workers discussing the STAR program. These advertisements were planned by the executive director of the agency without the author's knowledge.

These STAR programs gave the bulk of the information used to determine what avenues should have been pursued to access greater numbers of runaway youth in this program. While other agencies were contacted about the STAR/FO program, it became apparent that many of these agencies did not offer the services that our agency did. Conversely, the other agencies provided more of an in road to discussing the STAR program and its potential impact on at-risk youth.

5. Two of the three techniques added to the STAR program mentioned in this practicum were attained primarily from these interviews. The author had the pleasure of meeting some of these STAR providers at a conference in Austin, Texas that included STAR contractors that will be mentioned later in this chapter. These contractors all appeared to be concerned about these children and how best to reach them and obtain services for them.

Each of these programs was unique in the way they approached their clientele. As a group, they would do whatever they needed to do to reach these youth. Many of these programs were serving clients in rural areas, and workers went into the homes of these clients. Some of the larger urban area STAR programs occasionally, went into the homes, when there were transportation problems. Since the emphasis of the STAR program is to actually meet the client face-to-face, these STAR providers attempted to do this. As was mentioned, the

strategies to be employed in the author's STAR program had much of their basis from these interviews. Two of the three strategies suggested in this paper were validated by the other STAR contractors and the results of the surveys that were done on each of these providers.

As was mentioned in the first and second part of the phase one strategy, discussion or "life-skills" groups were set up in almost all STAR programs interviewed. As one can see from the STAR chart of those contractors interviewed by the author, groups were something that many of the STAR contractors used with their clients. They varied in purpose, time, and place. Most of the groups were done at night or on Saturdays. The groups were primarily skills-based groups. These groups did not focus on counseling but taught the youth(or parents) how to deal with everyday life skills. Some of the topics mentioned included: anger management: how to teach a youth to handle their anger and allow for appropriate expression of this feeling; conflict resolution: this group taught youth how to settle conflict without fights and how to solve conflicts in a healthy manner; drug groups: educating children about drugs and their effects; eating disorders: helping children to recognize this problem and how to overcome bulimia, anorexia, etc; grandparenting classes: for those who are raising their grandchildren and how to cope with being parents again, karate classes: it was hoped this class would teach discipline, but the director told me that this class didn't work out very well and was canceled, and self-esteem issues; helping the child to build up their self-esteem. These groups were to be offered in some form in the STAR contract with the state, but this agency had little success with these

groups in the past and had ceased having them for the STAR clients. With the addition of the FO program and the increased number youth having access to STAR services(namely, runaway youth), these groups ended up being set up during the ten week implementation period by the author's supervisor. There were meetings set up with the three regional supervisors of the STAR/FO program in the author's agency(the author was one of the supervisors) in which the program director dictated that there would need to be groups begun within the first part of November 1996. All STAR workers were involved in setting up these groups in order to encourage ownership of the program.

The six topics chosen were: anger management, conflict resolution, making good choices, accepting responsibility for your actions, decision-making, and finally, communication. The first of these groups was begun immediately after the end of the implementation period of this practicum. Another part of the solution strategy in phase one was insuring that there were incentives to encourage youth into these groups. This strategy was not accomplished. It was the author's opinion that each supervisor was entitled to do what they felt was best for their groups. In the author's region, the three STAR workers felt that there should be no incentives for these children, and felt that they were referred because of problems with the families and children and that they should not be rewarded for coming to the groups. Because of some of these attitudes, it was felt by the author that the groups should be monitored to see if incentives will be needed at a later time.

The third part of the phase one solution strategy was the desire to set up meeting

times with law enforcement groups and individuals to help facilitate a better understanding of the STAR/FO program. This was accomplished as planned. The author met with the youth officers as a group one time during the implementation period. The meeting was a time for information sharing about the STAR program. These officers were familiar with the FO program. After the program was discussed, some officers asked questions about the program. As was mentioned earlier in chapters 1 and 2, the police dealt directly with the runners and referred them to the Star program through the FO program with the author's agency. Because of this, there were several meetings between the author, the lieutenant overseeing the youth division of the police department, and the officer in charge of the runaway youth reported to the police department. These meetings proved to be helpful in leading to another strategy employed to access these runaway youth into the Star program. These meetings also,allowed those involved to discuss potential problems areas and how these areas could be resolved. The meetings with both men(usually individual meetingswith each) helped to keep the lines of communication open between the STAR/FO program and the police department. The fourth part of phase one in the solution strategy was centered around meeting times with the youth division lead officer, the assistant director of juvenile probation and the local child protective supervisor. It was determined early into this strategy that the CPS supervisor did not deal with runaway youth as did the other two administrators. The CPS supervisor unit dealt with families that required state intervention because of abuse or neglect. She typically did not deal with runaway youth as a rule and worked with families only. As a result, time was

spent with these other two supervisors of their various departments. Time spent with police and juvenile probation proved to be the most useful when looking to access the courts. Originally, it had been proposed that the STAR/FO program should determine a way to access the courts to ensure that runaway youth would use STAR services to prevent these runs from happening again with further harm to the child or further delinquent behavior to occur. This idea was lost in the process and was forgotten. When the author became the supervisor of the STAR/FO program, this was brought to his attention by the youth division of the police department and the assistant director of probation. This is where the "seed" was re-planted to access the courts. This avenue was also brought up at a STAR contractors conference. During the implementation process, the author met with the youth officer in charge of the youth division of the local police department, and the assistant program director for juvenile probation in the city. The juvenile probation director had mentioned using the courts to access runaway youth into the STAR/FO program as an option several months ago. The author had initially approached his supervisor about the possibility and she had felt that it would be too time consuming for the intake workers to make time for court dates for these runners.

Originally, it had been suggested that the runners be sent to court when they didn't take advantage of our services. There were two events which happened that quickened the need for services such as these. One, in August 1996, there occurred in Austin, a STAR contractors conference that attracted STAR providers like my agency from all over the state. During this conference, one

director of a STAR contract encountered a situation that forced her to use the court system. There was a client that had run multiple times and services had been offered to him. As was said in chapter 2, the STAR program is voluntary. Because of this, this runner did not use the program(and the parents did not want the services). As a result, this director took this family to court and through a process we will discuss later in this paper, was able to court order the family into the STAR program. At this same conference, the author sat down with the director of the Star program for the state and the Deputy Director for Legal Services for the Texas Department of Public and regulatory Services(TDPRS):He helped to explain many of the statutes in the juvenile laws. It was suggested that the courts access the runaway children referred through the police department. The legal expert discussed the Family Code of Texas and how that affects this type of youth. Questions were asked about the process for getting these youth into the courts. The expert said that the court would need to determine if the youth is considered at risk(see definition, Appendix D). The STAR contractor would need to ensure that the youth brought into the courts be a strong candidate to be determined at-risk. First, the youth would receive a letter from a legal representative stating that they were court- ordered to attend the STAR program. This letter would be sent if this runaway youth did not use the Star program. It would state that if they do not access the Star program and use those services, they run the risk of going before a judge and explaining why they did not access the Star program. If this youth and family did not respond to this , a petition would be filed and they would be held in contempt of court, the child

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would be picked up by police and taken to the juvenile detention center where he or she would access juvenile probation. The parents of the child could go to jail for six months and pay a $500.00 fine. The lawyer suggested that a meeting be set up with the municipal judge, juvenile probation, the county attorney, the STAR agency, and the police department to discuss this issue. The director of the STAR program said that the STAR attorney for the state could be used to speed up the process. He and the lawyer suggested that if court became an option, the family that is being taken to court be one that has been researched and determined to be at-risk and an excellent candidate for the STAR program, as evidenced by the problems both the family and child have exhibited in the past. The lawyer also encouraged the STAR program to determine if the district attorney would handle the case or if the STAR lawyer would need to take control of the case. Both these men mentioned that the Star agency should not lose sight of the focus that by going to court, the child and the family would get STAR services for help, not for punishment. Finally, it was suggested that using the letterhead of the judge or district attorney on the letter ordering the family to the STAR program, would get their attention. A second circumstance occurred that heightened the need for court access when the police department asked us for statistics on the FO program.

During a meeting on the FO program, statistical results showed that the many of those who did not access the STAR programs were multiple runaway youth. 71% of those who did not access STAR services were multiple runners. This meeting was attended by the president of the umbrella agency to which the STAR program

belonged, my supervisor, the assistant director of juvenile probation, 2 other probation officers that had worked the runaway program last year, and the author. Because of the concern for these runaway youth, the group decided that the main option open to them was accessing the courts, for these youth were offered the program and did not use it. Accessing the courts was discussed and it was suggested that the author and the officer in charge of the runaway youth set up a meeting time with a municipal or district judge to determine if these youth and their families could be adjudicated into The Star program. A preliminary draft was suggested that included a warning to these families that they needed to attend the STAR services or they would be subject to receiving a court order from the judge ordering them that they must attend counseling or risk contempt of the court, with further legal action possible. As a result of these two meetings, one in Austin and one in Abilene, the courts became one of the methods used as an avenue for getting these families and children to use the STAR services.

It had been discussed at the start of the STAR/FO program last year that the courts could become an answer to obtaining more runaway youth into the STAR services. The executive director suggested that some of the group meet with a judge about the possibility of accessing the courts. During the implementation time, the youth officer in charge of runaway youth and the author met with a juvenile judge to discuss the possibility of using the courts to access these youth. The youth officer at this meeting had previously worked with adults who were not making child support payments, and had devised a form to give to these people that stated that failure to make payments to their former spouses and families could

result in going before a judge and receiving court orders with consequences for these non-paying folks. He said that the letter about possible court action to be taken against these non-support paying parents got the attention of these folks. This officer stated that since that letter has been sent out, all have made their payments to families in a timely manner, with no court appearances. He suggested to the judge that the same results might occur with these runaway youth and their families, if they bring the court into this problem area. She said that she wanted to be sure that there was no conflict of interest with a juvenile court judge taking this client to court to force them to access STAR services and then having to sentence this child for a felony or misdemeanor offense at a later time. This judge was interested in the concept and said that she would bring it up before the other juvenile judges with the next few days. It was decided that the STAR program would not use the letterhead of the judge when sending the letter to the client instructing them to access the STAR program or go to court and face the consequences. Instead, the district attorney was considered as a source for this letter. When approached about this letter, the district attorney declined the offer. It was suggested that the assistant district attorney handle the letter and she agreed to this suggestion. The last meeting we had concerning the court access was between myself and the youth officer in charge of runaway youth. During this meeting the officer handed the author a booklet proposing a procedure for court access. A flow chart depicting how the process works is included in Appendix E. It is hoped that we will be able to complete the program and begin this letter by the first part of December.

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The fifth part of the phase one strategy involved meeting with the actual STAR intake workers under the supervision of the author. These meetings were to be done weekly with four workers. As was stated, 3 of these workers felt that they had too much to do in the program, and change that required more work was resisted. There were substantial changes in the program with forms and procedures and this caused stress among the workers. The meeting were profitable for passing information and soliciting suggestions, yet, if these suggestions required an increase in workload, some of the workers were not receptive to this. Much time was spent balancing the mandates from supervisors above him with concerns about the workers having enough time to do their panerwork, see clients, and still get everything done in a proper time frame. This strategy was followed but feedback on what could be done to increase the number of runaway youth was difficult to obtain from these workers. There was not a desire to increase the number of youth accessing the STAR program. The STAR workers hired expected the program to be more therapy oriented and were told this when interviewed for their present job. It is currrently moving toward a social work emphasis, which is not popular with these three workers. Some problems occurred because the STAR program had to make necessary changes that increased paperwork and accountability of the program. Other barriers to cooperation were last minute requests for statistics from the executive director of the organization. This heightened anxiety about the program and frustrated the workers as well as the author. While meetings were attended, it was not as successful as was hoped due to resistance from 3 of the 4 STAR intake workers.

Phase 2: This phase included the determination of which strategies to employ to reach each of the stated goals of chapter 3 of the practicum (p. 16).
Here it is necessary to move into the goals and objectives listed in chapter 3, as they tie into the second phase of the proposed solution strategy.

Goal 1: In the time frame allowed, there would be new ways or techniques implemented to access these runaway youth. There must be a disclaimer inserted here. The "new" ways or techniques were actually old techniques that had been used at an earlier time before the author became supervisor for the program. This was discovered as the research into the STAR program progressed into the ten-week implementation period. The re-definition of "new" to the program should be understood more as new techniques in the author's opinion, not programmatically as stated in goal 1.

Objective no. 1: There would be at least three avenues of access for these runaway youth to be developed or added into the Star program. This objective was met with success. Two of the three avenues projected to be used in the author's STAR program were obtained through the interview with the other STAR agencies in the state. The interviews with the STAR contractors in the state showed that there were several methods and strategies used to access youth and families into their programs. The schools were one of the main avenues that the STAR contractors used to access youth. Many of the contractors had life skills groups

in the schools, got referrals from the schools, and kept in close communication with the schools. Other STAR programs received clients from juvenile probation and CPS. As was stated previously in this chapter, all programs worked and communicated with schools, juvenile probation, CPS, the police departments, truancy, etc. It was clear in the interviews that importance was placed on keeping the lines of communication open between the Star providers and those who referred families and children in need of services. This was stressed over and over again during each interview. In chapter 4 of this practicum, there were several methods of access attempted with status offenders and runaway youth by other child care agencies in the past: youth shelters (19), both group and individual counseling (p. 20), working in the schools (p. 21), juvenile courts (p. 22), law enforcement (p. 23), cooperation between the agency and the community (p. 23), and advertising to the community (p. 24).

While youth shelters were a requirement for all Star programs, no programs stressed it as an access for these youth that was successful in getting them in the program. It was used only in emergencies. One of the most popular methods of reaching these children was by way of the local school. Many of the organizations advertised to the community in several ways. Some of the organizations sent out flyers and brochures. Some of these providers were innovative in the ways they advertised. As was mentioned earlier, book covers were given out at schools, posters were made and distributed, small footballs were thrown into the crowd at football games during halftime and visits were made to local stores to talk with store managers about STAR services. Outreach to the community was stressed,

as was communication between all agencies that worked with at-risk youth. Three methods were chosen for accessing these runaway youth. It was decided that accessing the courts to force the recidivist(multiple) runner into the STAR program was one avenue of entry to these youth. Another path chosen to receive these youth was setting up groups for youth that deal with specific topics that can help runaway youth cope better with the stress and pressure that they experience in their homes. Finally, going out into the community to inform the public of the services offered by the STAR program was chosen as the third method of accessing these youth. It was interesting to note that the court action mentioned in this chapter was the only avenue that most STAR agencies did not mention. As mentioned earlier, court access was viewed as a necessary part of reaching the multiple runner. The reader must remember that the STAR program is voluntary by nature and that accessing the courts is seen as a method of getting counseling for these families and these runaway youth with the hope that they will not end up in the juvenile system at a later time. As was mentioned, life-skills groups were already in the plans for the agency, as the author's director asked the STAR supervisors to put these groups together just as the ten week implementation began. The third method of acquiring more runaway youth into the STAR approach was the area of advertising the services of your agency to the community and other agencies. Pamphlets were already being developed when the ten week implementation was started. These brochures were given to all agencies and schools that we contacted about the STAR program. During the implementation period, the author was visiting agencies and organizations with these pamphlets

along with another sheet with information about this program. At the same time these outreach efforts were staring, the executive director of the author's umbrella agency paid for a television spot for the STAR program to promote it's services to the community. The author has already instructed the STAR intake workers to go out into the schools and community to discuss the components of the STAR program and what it offers to the community.

The second part of phase two was setting up meetings with various organizations to ensure that the lines of communication were open to these agencies that were involved in serving children and families.

Objective no. 2: One method of accessing these youth will be implemented during the ten week implementation period. What was proposed as an objective under the first goal was already being done in the community. Advertising or going out into the community was begun in the implementation period and some schools have been visited along with some agencies that are involved with families. The author made several contacts with other agencies in town before, during, and after the implementation period. In the last two weeks of this period, one STAR intake worker visited two schools outside the city to inform them of services that were offered through the STAR program.

Goal 2: Avenues of communication were to be established to allow for greater awareness of the runaway program. These agencies were to include, but not limited to the juvenile division of the police department, juvenile probation, CPS, etc.

Objective 1: way were to be determined to open lines of communication between the STAR program and other agencies who used our services. This objective was accomplished. The methods used were one of interviews and meetings that were set up as needed. The author visited several agencies to discuss the STAR program and ask if there were any issues that needed discussions. Monthly meetings never materialized with different groups. The author and the youth officer overseeing the runaway reports met once a month to see how the program was progressing, with discussion of problems if needed. These meeting have gone well. There was also time spent with the officer overseeing the youth division of the police department. These meetings were infrequent and were usually set up by the author to discuss any concerns. Also, meetings occured frequently with the assistant director of juvenile probation. Communication has been excellent between the myself and this man , as we attended college together in the past. Information flow has been excellent between these agencies.

Objective 2 : There were to be at least 4 agencies or organizations that were to be designated as agencies that would require regular lines of communication. This objective has not been fully met . If one reads this chapter, it is obvious that there are some organizations that will require good lines of communication because they work closely with the STAR/FO program. The youth division of law enforcement is an organization that refers runaway clients to us and is considered one of these agencies mentioned. Juvenile probation is another agency that requires good lines of communication as they handled the runaway youth last year. They want this program to work, for if the STAR/FO program can access these

runaway youth, get them counseling, and help to keep down further runs from these clients, then they can work with other children that need their attention in the system. There were other agencies that were visited and more that need visiting to discuss what STAR services are offered to the public. It was discovered that the local MHMR(Mental Health and Mental Retardation) agency works with children in a similar capacity as does the STAR program. This was discovered after the end of the implementation period. This agency may move into the third slot. There were many meetings during this ten week period. The author met with the youth officer that worked in the sheriff's department in the county. This meeting was informative for her and the STAR workers. Through this women, other contacts were made at schools outside the city limits. A meeting was set up between the juvenile probation officer who had supervised the runaway program the year before the STAR contract accepted handling all the runaway youth. It was interesting to note that this officer had experienced some of the same problems getting these runaway youth into their program. They use a program called "informal probation". This program could not force the child to access services through juvenile probation, but the youth did not typically understand that this was not court-ordered. This worker said that their numbers were somewhat higher on how many youth accessed their program, but they still experienced trouble with the multiple runner(these youth caused the runaway numbers to appear as if each run was done by several different youth, rather than one youth running away several times). It was exciting to think about the prospect of possibly using the courts to access these multiple runners.

There was a meeting set up by the MHA(Mental Health Association) for all agencies that worked with children and families. This was an excellent opportunity for meeting with other child care agencies in the city. Through this meeting, the author was able to schedule a visit with the director managing the crisis line that referred calls to us after regular hours. During this time, problems discussed and solved. Another meeting occurred between an alternative education program(a program that serves the child with severe behaviors that might cause them to be expelled) and the author.

It was determined that there are several agencies that need to hear about the STAR/FO program in the city. Also, it must be stressed that all meeting are important, because they may lead other agencies or groups to hear about our services. It must be said that there should not be 4 agencies or 14 agencies that require open lines of communication. All agencies need to access each other services and help each other with information and networking.

Objective 3: Educating our schools to the services provided by the STAR program was the central focus of this objective. It was hoped that 50% of the middle schools and high schools in the area were to be informed about our services. This objective has not been met. There are some reasons for this occurance. First, there has been resistance to going into the schools by the intake workers, as they are concerned about doing a group in the school for liability issues. Second, these workers were worried about how much time it would take to go to these schools and meet with officials. Third, groups in the schools through the STAR

program statewide may be affected by a ruling that may come from the STAR office in Austin, stating that only STAR clients can use these groups at schools. In the past, these groups have been open to all, and some liability issues were raised. However, the plan is to canvass the schools and alert them to our services. The author asked the workers to divide the city into three areas so that the three STAR workers could canvass all the schools in the area and begin to meet with administrators to inform them of our services. This is currently being done.

Finally, it was projected that one of the methods to validate the result of this practicum was interviewing workers at the end of the implementation period to determine if the methods used to access these youth would increase the number of runaway youth into this program. A survey was given to those workers who were involved in the gathering information for this practicum. This included several STAR staff member from the author's agency, juvenile probation officers, and police officers. It was hoped that there would be a 60% satisfaction rate that allows that these individuals were satisfied that there were added accesses to runaway youth. A copy of the survey form is in APPENDIX F. The survey was given to Star workers in the authors's agency, police officers, and some probation officers that the author had interviewed. One of the questions asked pertained to how well each person felt their opinion was considered. The response was that 60% agreed that their opinions were considered and 40 % felt that their opinion were occasionally considered. Four of the questions on the surveys asked the respondents if they felt that these strategies mentioned in the survey would

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increase or have the ability to increase the number of runners into the Star program. The four strategies listed were:

1. Accessing the schools and other agencies , informing them if STAR services will increase the number of youth entering the program.
2. Accessing the courts will increase the number of runners that use the STAR program.
3. Life-skills groups can help increase the number of youth into the STAR program.
4. Communication between STAR agencies and other child care agencies, resolving difficulties in the program, and helping to run the program smoother can increase the runaway youth into the STAR approach.

The results were as followed:

1. 100% of the respondents agreed that this strategy would help to increase the number of youth into the program.
2. 62.5% of the workers felt that accessing the courts would help to get these children and families into the Star program. 12.5% of the workers felt that it would not work and 25% felt were uncertain that this would work.
3. 37.5% of those surveyed felt that groups would help access youth into the Star program. 12.5% felt that groups would not help to get runaway youth into the program. 50% of respondents were uncertain.
4. 100% of the respondents felt that good communication between agencies would help to run things smoother and possibly increase runners into the program.

This survey shows that the respondents are in agreement that the methods chosen to help access these runaway youth are supported by the respondents. The only question that was a concern addressed the issue of using groups. Those who had

worked the STAR program and were surveyed said that they were uncertain about how well these groups would help to access runners into the Star program. This response was not a surprise. Several of the STAR providers felt that the groups helped to teach youth some skills and coping methods, but acknowledged that it was difficult to keep children in these groups. Only time will help to determine if the groups are successful.

To end this chapter, it must be noted that the ten week implementation process was difficult to follow on a week by week basis(see appendix C). Eight tasks were addressed in the implementation period.

Task 1 involved researching different areas to determine additional ways to access runaway youth. This was done during the entire ten week period.

Task 2 consisted of deciding which agencies and groups would be targeted for better lines of communication. Calls were to be made to other STAR contractors to compare how they accessed their children. This task was was completed but was it was determined that communication should be open with all child care agencies.

Task 3, 4,5,6 entailed setting up and determining what strategies were to be used to access these runaway youth. These were worked on throughout the implementation period.

Task 7 and 8 were finalizing goals that required the implementation of strategies. Not all strategies were finalized as there were several agencies involved in some of the strategies. Accessing the courts took much longer than expected. However, there were several individuals involved and there

was a feeling that everything needs to be in place before the courts are accessed for these runaway youth and their families. As was mentioned, advertising was being done before the period ended, groups were begun at the end of that time and agency communication and cooperation was ongoing and not limited to any one group of agencies.

It was difficult to maintain exact dates on many of these tasks because of the nature of the information gathering(interviews), for many of them were on-going and occasionally, job responsibilities interfered with keeping up with the schedule.

Chapter VI

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this practicum was to discover additional avenues or paths in which runaway youth would be able to access a runaway program and it's services. This was a necessary action as the STAR program was expanding in size. It was understood that there needed to be changes made in the program to handle the influx of runaway youth that were to be sent to this program. It was determined early in the practicum that there needed to be additional ways to get these runners into a program that offered counseling, crisis intervention, and other services. It was felt that if the runaway youth could receive some counseling, then it might help these children and families to solve some of their problems and cut down on these runs.

Ample time was spent in interviews in person and many hours on the phone, trying to determine what were the best methods to reach these runaway youth.

The results of this practicum document showed that there were methods and ways to access runaway youth into a program that offers help to these youth and their families. Three avenues of access were researched and developed, and two of the three methods were implemented during or at the end of the ten week implementation period.

First, it was decided that one way of accessing runaway youth into the STAR

program was to set up life-skills groups which helped youth to deal with such subjects as handling your anger, resolving conflicts, taking responsibility for your actions, learning how to communicate, making good choices, and decision-making. This first group met one week after the implementation period to begin this six-week class. This method of accessing youth into the STAR program was substantiated by interviewing other STAR programs. There had been groups in the past and they had not been successful. It was felt in this organization that groups may not do as well as hoped, yet there were several STAR contractors that had success with these groups and getting people into them.

The second avenue chosen centered in on the courts. This avenue was the big surprise of the practicum. It had the support of most of those surveyed at the end of the implementation period. While it was decided that this would be a strategy to access these youth, it took extra time and effort to put this program together. It was important to have this avenue of access be complete as possible, because of the fact that this was designed to access the multiple runner.

The third strategy chosen involved informing schools, agencies and other organizations about the services the STAR program provides for those youth considered "at risk" youth. It should be mentioned that as this area was being considered as an area that might increase runaway youth into the program. It became clear that there were television and newspaper spots informing the public about the Star program. This was unexpected, but welcomed.

Several agencies were contacted to inform these organizations about the services that the Star program provides for the runaway youth, as well as the

youth with school or family problems. The outcome of these visits was positive, even though there were not four agencies chosen to designate as groups that needed regular lines of communication. The outcome changed as it was realized that there were some organizations that worked closely with the STAR program and that they needed more communication. However, it was this author's that there needs to communication between as many agencies as possible, as they all serve children. We met agencies that were thought to be small organizations which turned out to have great potential in meeting families' and childrens' needs. One must be careful not to box an agency into a category in which it might not fit. Also, there are agencies in the city that one might be able to access services through that are not known by all agencies.

The schools were not accessed as had been planned in the solution strategy. There were some reasons for this decision. When the idea of having groups was introduced, one school was approached about this possibility. When the principal heard about this group, he immediately referred us to the administrator in charge of programs in the area district. This administrator was appropriate, but made it clear that only one group would be started at the school. The STAR workers were not excited about the idea of groups in the schools, because they felt that they might run late and asked who would take the child home if they came to the group and their ride did not show after the meeting. Also, they were concerned about liability for the child and who was responsible for them. Finally, the STAR organizations in Austin, Texas wanted to look into liability issues, as some of the STAR contractors were not requiring youth to participate in the program, yet they

were responsible for them. These issues slowed up accessing of the schools. Currently, after talking with school officials, it is being discovered that many schools do not know about our services and are anxious to use them.

There were some unexpected outcomes from meeting these goals. It was found that all three masters' students that the author had employed were resistant to some of the changes in the program. Initially, it was felt that the workers were somewhat entitled and were complaining about the job because of the inconveniences. What was discovered was a negative attitude to social work, as they preferred to do therapy with their clients, versus social work. It must be added these workers are hard workers and attempt to meet the responsibilites of the job. The problem was an idealogical one, not a poor work ethic. This attitude was prevalent when a lead STAR person was told that there might be a time in which the STAR worker may need to go into the home to meet the family there. This worker told the supervisor that when that happens she will be forced to move into another job, because she didn't want to do social work. These attitudes affected how much they were wanting the program to grow.

Implications

An area that was a surprise was how similar and different each of the STAR programs were in the state. They gave their opinions, yet were fiercely loyal to the way their local STAR program. This allows for individuality, yet does not allow

for conformity. During the interview process, there were moments in which the STAR provider on the other end of the phone line could not relate our agency's StAR program. It appeared that they were comfortable with their own ways of accomplishing goals and didn't understand they way we worked our program.

It became clear during this practicum that communication between agencies is crucial as the face of the welfare system begins to affect us all. An example of this is that fact that there is a major shift in how the STAR providers determined if a child is successful in the program. Not all the details are clear but it appears that they have changed the definition of what is considered a successful completion of the program. Communication is crucial in making chnages in our program to meet childrens' and families' needs. All the cgencies visited, agreed that lines of communication must remain open, as we are headed toward an era which will require great collaboration between agencies. It should not longer be "us against them" but more of" let's work together" on this problem.

It should be pointed out that when working with runaway youth, it is imperative that one remember that most of the youth who access these services will do so voluntary. When a program is voluntary and you have children that need help but don't ask for it, problems can occur in that the number of youth you served may not be as high. It may be necessary to implement some type of reward system for coming to the groups.

When setting up a new project, it is important that you make an attempt at soliciting advice from others when looking for new direction for a program. If possible, try to use some of their advice so that they feel the program is theirs,

and not a supervisor's. Empower your staff by using their ideas, when applicable, and try to get them to share the vision with you. The STAR intake workers at this agency didn't share the vision. If possible, ensure that your workers are on the same "page" idealogically when working a new program.

Finally, it has become clear that having workers who have a strong therapy background can be a detriment to a program with a strong social work emphasis as this. This is the main factor that has caused friction in the program with the STAR workers and management. This will continue to be a problem unless one of two things happens: either the workers change their focus and become for flexible, or they seek employment elsewhere.

Future Consideration

While researching information for this practicum, it was discovered that the STAR program has a category for mentoring individuals. There was no mention of this type of service in the literature for this paper. One STAR provider put together a mentoring program. It took this supervisor eight months to get all the legal issues worked out, training set up, etc. This is an area which should bear some future consideration in the area of runaway youth. As Cohen(1991) states runaway youth are more susceptible to drug use and prostitution (p. 821). If a child could have access to an adult who would be a role model for him or her, helping the child to survive and thrive with guidance, then this might change some runaway youth into contributing members of society, knowing that someone cares for them enough

to spend time with them. The STAR agency in this practicum will be working on a mentoring program in the spring.

Another area for future consideration should involve researching programs that were court ordered for the youth and families, and determine if they were successful. One concern about the court-ordered youth from one staff member focused on the assumption that being ordered through the courts will encourage resentment from that youth toward the program to which he or she was sent. Further, will the youth and family resent the intrusion and decide that they will go to whatever is asked of them,or will they determine not to listen or put to use principles learned in these sessions or groups? This will be an area that will be examined with scrutiny to see if these youth will learn from this experience or resent it and end up in the court system again.

For the STAR program in this city, more changes will be made. This has been communicated to us from the STAR specialists. There will be a time in which the STAR workers may go into the homes, only, in special situations. This will change the current office type job that the workers experience now. It will require more flexibility by the workers. My supervisor feels that those families who have no transportation may need to be visited in the home. When this occurs, this will have a ripple affect on the program and cause some of the Star staff to seek employment elsewhere.

Finally, the practicum results will be shared with other agencies in the city. Some of those agencies already contacted know of the results. The court access is still

not complete. It is hoped that by the first part of December this tool will be ready to use. The research done on the runaway youth has been shared with the STAR workers and will be shared with other STAR workers in the future. The channels to be used to access youth are already being set up or used(all except the court access). There will be time at other conferences to share the results with other STAR providers to compare similar experiences or detemine other methods of accessing these youth.

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APPENDIX A

First Offender Program 52.031

As a matter of precaution, it would be wise for the head of a law enforcement agency to designate all places of nonsecure custody also to be juvenile curfew processing offices so there will be no confusion as to where a child can be taken. In some communities, it may make sense to designate other places, perhaps on school property, exclusively as juvenile curfew processing offices.

The six hour limit is absolute. If the child is not released before the end of that period, he or she may be transported to the juvenile detention facility, but only upon order of a municipal or justice court under 51.08(b). Upon arrival at the detention facility, custody is permitted but only for 24 hours, because the child is a status offender and comes under the special rules of 54.011.

Subsection (c) states, for local political reasons, that the juvenile board has no power to approve or disapprove of the selection by the head of a law-enforcement agency of a place as a juvenile curfew processing office.

§ 52.03. Disposition Without Referral to Court

(a) A law-enforcement officer authorized by this title to take a child into custody may dispose of the case of a child taken into custody without referral to juvenile court, if:

(1) guidelines for such disposition have been issued by the law-enforcement agency in which the officer works;

(2) the guidelines have been approved by the juvenile **board** [court] of the county in which the disposition is made;

(3) the disposition is authorized by the guidelines; and

(4) the officer makes a written report of his disposition to the law-enforcement agency, identifying the child and specifying the grounds for believing that the taking into custody was authorized.

(b) unchanged.

(c) A disposition authorized by this section may involve:

(1) referral of the child to an agency other than the juvenile court; [or]

(2) a brief conference with the child and his parent, guardian, or custodian; or

(3) **referral of the child and the child's parent, guardian, or custodian for services under Section 264.302.**

Commentary by Robert Dawson

The amendment in (a)(2) shifting approval power from the juvenile court to the juvenile board is consistent with a pattern in HB 327 of giving increasing duties to the juvenile board.

The reference in (c)(3) is to the child at-risk program operated by the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.

§ 52.031. First Offender Program

(a) A juvenile board may establish a first offender program under this section for the referral and disposition of children taken into custody for:

(1) conduct indicating a need for supervision; or

(2) delinquent conduct other than conduct that constitutes:

(A) a felony of the first, second, or third degree, an aggravated controlled substance felony, or a capital felony; or

(B) a state jail felony or misdemeanor involving violence to a person or the use or possession of a firearm, illegal knife, or club, as those terms are defined by Section 46.01, Penal Code, or a prohibited weapon, as described by Section 46.05, Penal Code.

(b) Each juvenile board in the county in which a first offender program is established shall designate one or more law enforcement officers and agencies, which may be law enforcement agencies, to process a child under the first offender program.

(c) The disposition of a child under the first offender program may not take place until:

(1) guidelines for the disposition have been issued by the agency designated under Subsection (b); and

(2) the juvenile board has approved the guidelines.

(d) A law enforcement officer taking a child into custody may refer the child to the law enforcement officer or agency designated under Subsection (b) for disposition under the first offender program and not refer the child to juvenile court only if:

(1) the child has not previously been adjudicated as having engaged in delinquent conduct;

(2) the referral complies with guidelines for disposition under Subsection (c); and

(3) the officer reports in writing the referral to the agency, identifying the child and specifying the grounds for taking the child into custody.

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(e) A child referred for disposition under the first offender program may not be detained in law enforcement custody.

(f) The parent, guardian, or other custodian of the child must receive notice that the child has been referred for disposition under the first offender program. The notice must:

(1) state the grounds for taking the child into custody;

(2) identify the law enforcement officer or agency to which the child was referred;

(3) briefly describe the nature of the program; and

(4) state that the child's failure to complete the program will result in the child being referred to the juvenile court.

(g) The child and the parent, guardian, or other custodian of the child must consent to participation by the child in the first offender program.

(h) Disposition under a first offender program may include:

(1) voluntary restitution by the child or the parent, guardian, or other custodian of the child to the victim of the conduct of the child;

(2) voluntary community service restitution by the child;

(3) educational, vocational training, counseling, or other rehabilitative services; and

(4) periodic reporting by the child to the law enforcement officer or agency to which the child has been referred.

(i) The case of a child who successfully completes the first offender program is closed and may not be referred to juvenile court, unless the child is taken into custody under circumstances described by Subsection (j)(3).

(j) The case of a child referred for disposition under the first offender program shall be referred to juvenile court if:

(1) the child fails to complete the program;

(2) the child or the parent, guardian, or other custodian of the child terminates the child's participation in the program before the child completes it; or

(3) the child completes the program but is taken into custody under Section 52.01 before the 90th day after the date the child completes the program for conduct other than the conduct for which the child was referred to the first offender program.

(k) A statement made by a child to a person giving advice or supervision or participating in the first offender program may not be used against the child in any proceeding under this title or any criminal proceeding.

(l) The law enforcement agency must report to the juvenile board in December of each year the following:

(1) the last known address of the child, including the census tract;

(2) the gender and ethnicity of the child referred to the program; and

(3) the offense committed by the child.

Commentary by Robert Dawson

The first offender program is a special version of disposition without referral authorized by the previous section. The only substantive difference is that periodic reporting to a law enforcement agency is authorized under this section but prohibited under the previous section.

Although the program is administered by the law enforcement agency, it is established by the juvenile board. If the juvenile board wishes to establish a first offender program under this section, it must comply with the restrictions of this section. However, the law enforcement agency and juvenile board may establish a similar program under 52.03--without periodic reporting--and avoid complying with these restrictions.

The reporting provisions in (l) reflect concern that a first offender program may be used in a discriminatory manner. The information required to be reported, when combined with other data, would enable the juvenile board to determine whether that is occurring. While there is no similar reporting requirement in 52.03, it would be wise policy to include the same data in the annual report required by that section as are required by this section.

§ 52.041. Referral of Child to Juvenile Court After Expulsion

(a) A school district that expels a child shall refer the child to juvenile court in the county in which the child resides.

(b) The board of the school district or a person designated by the board shall deliver a copy of the order expelling the student and any other information required by Section 52.04 on or before the second working day after the date of the expulsion hearing to the authorized officer of the juvenile court.

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APPENDIX B

Misdemeanor and State Jail Felonies

Misdemeanor and State Jail Felony Offenses Based on 1994 Penal Code

Section	Offense	Designation
16.01	Unlawful Use of Criminal Instrument	State Jail
16.02	Unlawful Interception, Use, or Disclosure of Wire, Oral, or Electronic Communication	State Jail
16.04	Unlawful Access to Stored Communication	Class A, or possibly State Jail
16.05	Illegal Divulgence of Public Communication	State Jail, Class A or C based on some conditions
20.02	False Imprisonment	Class B unless it involves exposure to substantial risk of bodily injury, then 3d Degree Felony
21.06	Homosexual Conduct	Class C
21.07	Public Lewdness	Class A
21.08	Indecent Exposure	Class B
22.01	Assault	Bodily Injury: Class A Threat or offensive touch: Class C
22.04	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
22.05	Deadly Conduct [illegible]	Class A
22.07	Terroristic Threat	Class A or B unless intent to cause impairment of public utilities, communications, transport: 3d degree felony
22.08	Aiding Suicide	Class C or State Jail
22.10	Leaving a Child in a Vehicle	Class C
25.01	Bigamy	Class A
25.03	Interference with Child Custody	State Jail
25.031	Agreement to Abduct Child from Custody	State Jail
25.04	Enticing a Child	Class B
25.05	Criminal Nonsupport	State Jail
25.07	Violation of a Protective Order	Class A
28.03	Criminal Mischief (Under $20,000 or "Subsequent Involvement")	Class A, B, C, or State Jail
28.04	Reckless Damage or Destruction	Class C
28.07	Interference with Railroad Property	Class A, B, C, or State Jail
30.02	Burglary (Building other than Habitation)	State Jail
30.03	Burglary of Coin-Operated or Coin Collection Machines	Class A
30.04	Burglary of Vehicles	Class A
30.05	Criminal Trespass	Class A or B
31.03	Theft	Class A, B, C, or State Jail [illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

[illegible]

Section	Offense	Designation
16.01	Unlawful Use of Criminal Investigative	State Jail
16.02	Unlawful Interception, Use or Disclosure of Wire, Oral, or Electronic Communications	State Jail
16.04	Unlawful Access to Stored Communications	Class A, or possibly State Jail
16.05	Illegal Divulgence of Public Communications	State Jail, Class A or Class C based on some conditions
19.02	False Imprisonment	Class B unless it involves exposure to substantial risk of bodily injury, then 3d Degree Felony
21.06	Homosexual Conduct	Class C
21.07	Public Lewdness	Class A
21.08	Indecent Exposure	Class B
22.01	Assault	Bodily Injury: Class A Threat or offensive touch: Class C
22.04	Injury to a Child, Elderly Individual or Disabled Individual	[illegible]
22.05	Experimentation on Human Subjects	[illegible]
22.011	Sexual Assault	[illegible]
22.012	Aggravated Sexual Assault	[illegible]
22.02	Aggravated Assault	[illegible]
22.021	Aggravated Sexual Assault of a Child	[illegible]
22.03	Deadly Assault on Law Enforcement, Security Officer, Firefighter, Emergency Services Personnel, Corrections Employee, Juvenile Probation Officer, Juvenile Supervision Officer, Juvenile Corrections Officer, Special Investigator, Judge, Clerk, Prosecutor, Member of Board of Pardons and Paroles, Parole Officer, Court Coordinator, Associate Judge, Mental Health Deputy, Member of Texas Civil Commitment Office, Federal Officer, Member of Texas Military Forces, Security Officer of Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Texas Juvenile Justice Department, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, Texas Department of State Health Services, Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services, Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, Texas Lottery Commission, Department of Information Resources, Texas Racing Commission, Texas Department of Agriculture, Texas Education Agency, Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Texas Commission on Fire Protection, Texas Department of Insurance, Texas Office of Public Utility Counsel, Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Department of Rural Affairs, Texas Department of Banking, Department of Savings and Mortgage Lending, Texas State Securities Board, Texas Department of Motor Vehicles

Indictable and State Jail Felony Offenses Listed in 1994 Penal Code

Section	Offense	Punishment
12.21	Forgery	State Jail (Except in cases involving certain governmental records, money, bonds, deed of trust, etc.)
12.22	Criminal Simulation	Class A
12.16	Victim Child of Child Abuse	Class A
12.17	False Statement to Obtain Property or Credit	State Jail
12.18	Hindering Secured Creditors (up to $20,000)	Class A
12.19	Fraudulent Transfer of Motor Vehicle (up to $20,000)	Class A, B, C or State Jail
12.20	Theft Card Transaction Record Laundering (up to $20,000)	State Jail or Class A if conduct involves failure to inform issuer of theft/etc.
12.21	Deceptive Business Practices	Class A, B or C
12.22	Commercial Bribery	State Jail
12.23	Misuse Publicly Endorsed Contest	Class A
12.24	Use of Consumer's Indebtedness for Credit	Class A, B or C or State Jail
12.25	Misapplication of Property Held as Fiduciary or Financial Agent (up to $20,000)	Class A, B or C or State Jail
20.03	Improper Influence	Class A
20.05	Tampering with a Witness	State Jail
20.06	Acceptance of Honorarium	Class A
20.09	Gift to Public Servant by Person Subject to His Jurisdiction	Class A
20.10	Offering Gift to Public Servant	Class A
20.11	Perjury	Class A
20.16	Jury Tampering	Class A
20.20	Tampering with Governmental Record	Class A (State Jail under certain circumstances)
21.11	Indecency with Child (Other than Peace Officer)	Class A
21.12	Improper Relationship between Educator and Student	Class B
22.01	Assault	Class B or A
22.02	Aggravated Assault (e.g., Assault to Impede Breathing or Circulation; Assault with Deadly Weapon)	Class A
22.04	Injury to Child, Elderly or Disabled Person	Class B to Capital Felony (Class of offense based on age of victim, bodily injury or use of deadly weapon, etc.)
22.05	Deadly Conduct	Class A
22.07	Terroristic Threat	Class B to Capital Felony (Class of offense based on age of victim, bodily injury or use of deadly weapon, etc.)
22.08	Aiding Suicide	Class B
22.09	Tampering with Consumer Product	Class A

Section	Offense	Designation
38.06	Escape (unless it is felon who escapes from penal institution or a deadly weapon was used)	Class A
38.07	Permitting or Facilitating Escape (unless escapee was incarcerated felon, used or threatened to use a deadly weapon, or employee of institution intentionally committing offense)	Class A
38.10	Bail Jumping and Failure to Appear	Class A or C (unless offense was a felony: 3d degree felony)
38.113	Unauthorized Absence from Community Corrections Facility	State Jail
38.12	Barratry (unless repeat offense)	Class A
38.123	Unauthorized Practice of Law (unless repeat offense)	Class A
38.13	Hindering Proceedings by Disorderly Conduct	Class A
38.14	Taking or Attempting to Take Weapon from Peace Officer	State Jail
38.15	Interference with Public Duties	Class B
39.02	Abuse of Official Capacity (up to $20,000)	Class A, B, C or State Jail
39.03	Official Oppression	Class A
39.04	Violations of Civil Rights of Person in Custody	Class A
39.05	Failure to Report Death of Prisoner	Class B
39.06	Misuse of Official Information (if public servant offender coerces another not to report)	Class C
42.01	Disorderly Conduct	Class B or C
42.02	Riot	Class B
42.03	Obstructing Highway or Passageway	Class B
42.05	Disrupting Meeting or Procession	Class B
42.06	False Alarm or Report	Class A or State Jail
42.061	Silent or Abusive Calls to 911 Service	Class B
42.07	Harassment (unless stalking with prior conviction)	Class A or B
42.08	Abuse of Corpse	Class A
42.09	Cruelty to Animals	Class A
42.10	Dog Fighting	Class A, C or State Jail
42.11	Destruction of Flag	Class A
43.02	Prostitution	Class A or B
43.03	Promotion of Prostitution	Class A
43.22	Obscene Display or Distribution	Class C
43.23	Obscenity	Class A or State Jail
43.24	Sale, Distribution, or Display of Harmful Material to Minor	Class A (unless hiring minor to assist in offense: 3d degree felony)
43.251	Employment Harmful to Children	Class A
46.02	Unlawful Carrying Weapons	Class A (unless on premises serving alcohol: 3d degree felony)
46.05	Prohibited Weapons (switchblade or knuckles only)	Class A
46.06	Unlawful Transfer of Certain Weapons	Class A
46.08	Hoax Bombs	Class A
47.02	Gambling	Class C
47.03	Gambling Promotion	Class A
47.04	Keeping a Gambling Place	Class A
47.05	Communicating Gambling Information	Class A

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Section	Offense	Designation
47.06	Possession of Gambling Device, Equipment, or Paraphernalia	Class A
48.01	Smoking Tobacco	Class C
48.02	Prohibition of the Sale and Purchase of Human Organs	Class A
49.02	Public Intoxication	Class C
49.03	Consumption or Possession of Alcoholic Beverage in Motor Vehicle	Class C
49.04	Driving While Intoxicated (1st and 2nd conviction)	Class A and B
49.05	Flying While Intoxicated (1st and 2nd conviction)	Class A and B
49.06	Boating While Intoxicated	Class A and B
71.02	Engaging Organized Criminal Activity	One category higher than most serious offense committed; or same category as mot serious offense conspired to commit
481.112 481.113 481.114	Manufacture or Delivery: Group 1, 2, 3, or 4 (less than 1 gram)	State Jail
481.115 481.116	Possession: Group 1 or 2 (less than 1 gram)	State Jail
481.117 481.118	Possession Group 3 or 4 (less than 28 grams)	Class A or B
481.119	Manufacture, Delivery or Possession: Miscellaneous Substances	Class A or B
481.120	Delivery of Marijuana (up to 5 lbs)	Class A, B or State Jail
'81.121	Possession of Marijuana (up to 5 lbs)	Class A, L or State Jail
481.125	Possession or Delivery of Drug Paraphernalia	Class B, C or State Jail
481.127	Unauthorized Disclosure of Information	State Jail
481.128	Commercial Matters (unless negligently committed)	State Jail
481.129	Fraud (miscellaneous fraud offenses)	Class A and B
481.131	Diversion of Controlled Substance Property or Plant	State Jail
481.133	Falsification of Drug Test Results	Class A or B
482.002	Unlawful Delivery or Manufacture with Intent to Deliver	State Jail
483.041	Possession of Dangerous Drug	Class A or B
483.042	Delivery or Offer of Delivery of Dangerous Drug	State Jail
483.043	Manufacture of Dangerous Drug	State Jail
483.045	Forging or Altering Prescription	Class A or B
483.046	Failure to Retain Prescription	Class A or B
483.047	Refilling Prescription Without Authorization	Class A or B
483.048	Unauthorized Communication of Prescription	Class A or B
483.049	Failure to Maintain Records	Class A or B
483.050	Refusal to Permit Inspection	Class A or B
483.051	Using or Revealing Trade Secrets	Class A or B
483.052	Violation of Other Provision	Class A or B
484.003	Possession and Use (Volatile Chemical)	Class B
484.004	Inhalant Paraphernalia	Class A or B
484.005	Delivery to a Minor	Class B
485.031	Possession and Use (Glue and Paint)	Class B
485.032	Manufacture and Delivery	Class A
485.033	Delivery to a Minor	State Jail
485.034	Inhalant Paraphernalia	Class A or B

Section	Offense	Designation
485.035	Failure to Post Sign	Class C
485.036	Sale Without Permit	Class B

APPENDIX C

Ten Week Implementation Period

Ten Week Implementation Process

Week 1: Task 1: Begin to research different areas that can help determine ways to better access these runaway youth. Seek other agencies and STAR programs for feedback on these areas.

Task 2: Begin by determining the agencies and groups that will be targeted for better communications. Begin to set up meeting with different agency administrative staff to open lines of communication. Call other STAR agencies in the state to determine how they access these runaway youth.

Week 2: Continue to implement the strategies outlined in Week 1

Week 3: Continue to implement the strategies outlined in Week 1

Week 4: Continue to implement the strategies outlined in Week 1

Week 5: Continue to implement the strategies outlined in Week 1
Task 3: Begin to define some strategies by compiling information gained from interviews of other STAR programs and other agencies.

Week 6: Continue to implement task 1, 2, 3

Week 7: Task 4: Implement at least one strategy for accessing runaway youth into the STAR program. Defind where this strategy will be the most successful.

Week 8: Task 5: Begin to define what will be the other strategies used to access these runaway youth. Define when the strategies will take place and where they will take place. Continue task 2.

Week 9: Task 6: Begin to decide what agencies are necessary to keep lines of communication open pertaining to the runaway program. Begin to

decide what are the best ways to keep in communication with these agencies.

Week 10: Task 7: Finalize and begin to implement 4 strategies used to access these runaway youth.

Task 8: Finalize communication structure between agencies and schools and determine which agencies will require communication structure.

APPENDIX D

At Risk Youth Defined

(4) parenting skills training; and

(5) youth coping skills training.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, § 1, eff. April 20, 1995.

For text of section effective January 1, 1996, see § 264.301, post

§ 264.301. Services for At-Risk Youth

Text of section effective January 1, 1996

(a) The department shall operate a program to provide services for children in at-risk situations and for the families of those children.

(b) The services under this section may include:

(1) crisis family intervention;

(2) emergency short-term residential care;

(3) family counseling;

(4) parenting skills training;

(5) youth coping skills training;

(6) mentoring; and

(7) advocacy training.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 20, § 1, eff. April 20, 1995. Amended by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 262, § 58, eff. Jan. 1, 1996.

For text of section effective until January 1, 1996, see § 264.301, ante

§ 264.302. Early Youth Intervention Services

Text of section effective January 1, 1996

(a) This section applies to a child who:

(1) is seven years of age or older and under 17 years of age; and

(2) has not had the disabilities of minority for general purposes removed under Chapter 31.

(b) The department shall operate a program under this section to provide services for children in at-risk situations and for the families of those children.

(c) The department may not provide services under this section to a child who has at any time been referred to juvenile court for engaging in conduct that violates a penal law of this state of the grade of felony other than a state jail felony.

(d) The department may provide services under this section to a child who engages in conduct for which the child may be found by a court to be an at-risk child, without regard to whether the conduct violates a penal law of this state of the grade of felony other than a state jail felony, if the child was younger than 10 years of age at the time the child engaged the conduct.

(e) The department shall provide services, dire or by contract, for a child and the child's family if child is referred to the department as an at-risk c by:

(1) a court under Section 264.304;

(2) a juvenile court or probation departmen part of a progressive sanctions program ur Chapter 59;

(3) a law enforcement officer or agency ur Section 52.03; or

(4) a justice or municipal court under Sec 54.022.

(f) The services under this section may incl

(1) crisis family intervention;

(2) emergency short-term residential care children 10 years of age or older;

(3) family counseling;

(4) parenting skills training;

(5) youth coping skills training;

(6) advocacy training; and

(7) mentoring.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 262, § 58, eff. Ja 1996.

§ 264.303. Commencement of Civil Action for termination of At-Risk Children

Text of section effective January 1, 1996

(a) The department may file a civil action to req any district court or county court, other than a j nile court, to determine that a child is an at-risk c A person with whom the department contract provide services under Section 264.302 may file action under this section if the department has proved the filing.

(b) Notice of the action must be provided to:

(1) the child;

(2) the parent, managing conservator, or gu ian of the child; and

(3) any other member of the child's house who may be affected by an order of the court if court finds that the child is an at-risk child.

(c) A person served with notice of the action r but is not required, to file a written answer.

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answer must be filed before the hearing on the action begins.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 262, § 58, eff. Jan. 1, 1996.

§ 264.304. Hearing; Determination of At-Risk Child

Text of section effective January 1, 1996

(a) Unless a later date is requested by the department, the court shall set a date and time for the hearing not later than 30 days after the date the action is filed.

(b) The court is the trier of fact at the hearing.

(c) The court shall determine that the child is an at-risk child if the court finds that the child has engaged in the following conduct:

(1) conduct, other than a traffic offense and except as provided by Subsection (d), that violates:

(A) the penal laws of this state; or

(B) the penal ordinances of any political subdivision of this state;

(2) the unexcused voluntary absence of the child on 10 or more days or parts of days within a six-month period or three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period from school without the consent of the child's parent, managing conservator, or guardian;

(3) the voluntary absence of the child from the child's home without the consent of the child's parent, managing conservator, or guardian for a substantial length of time or without intent to return;

(4) conduct that violates the laws of this state prohibiting driving while intoxicated or under the influence of intoxicating liquor (first or second offense) or driving while under the influence of any narcotic drug or of any other drug to a degree that renders the child incapable of safely driving a vehicle (first or second offense); or

(5) conduct that evidences a clear and substantial intent to engage in any behavior described by Subdivisions (1)–(4).

(d) The court may not determine that a child is an at-risk child if the court finds that the child engaged in conduct violating the penal laws of this state of the grade of felony other than a state jail felony when the child was 10 years of age or older.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 262, § 58, eff. Jan. 1, 1996.

§ 264.305. Court Order for Services

Text of section effective January 1, 199

(a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) court finds that the child is an at-risk chil Section 264.304, the court may order the ch child's parent, managing conservator, or gua any other member of the child's household to pate in services provided by the departmen Section 264.302 and contained in a plan appr the court.

(b) The court may order an at-risk child to pate in services involving emergency short-te dential care only if the court finds that t engaged in conduct described by Section 264.3 (2), (3), or (4).

(c) An order rendered by a court under this expires not later than six months after the order was rendered.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 262, § 58, ef 1996.

§ 264.306. Sanctions

Text of section effective January 1, 199

(a) A child who violates a court order under 264.305 by failing to participate in services by the department engages in conduct indi need for supervision and the department sh the child to an appropriate juvenile autho proceedings under Title 3 for that conduct.

(b) A parent, managing conservator, guar other member of the child's household who v court order under Section 264.305 by failing t pate in services provided by the department i to contempt of court. The court may under tempt powers impose a community service ment.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 262, § 58, e 1996.

[Sections 264.307 to 264.400 reserved for ex

SUBCHAPTER E. CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS

§ 264.401. Definition

In this subchapter, "center" means a advocacy center.

Added by Acts 1995, 74th Leg., ch. 255, § 1, ef 1995.

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APPENDIX E

Court Access Flow Chart

Child is located
Child is Referred to The STARS Program
Parents bring the child in and successfully complete the program
HFS contacts the parents by phone
The parent refuses to bring in the child
STARS Staff Request a letter be sent by the Taylor County District Attorney's Office
A letter is sent, a time limit is issued
Parents refuse to contact HFS or set up an appointment and do not show
HFS contacts the DA and request a hearing
Parent and child court ordered to attend and complete the program
Parent and/or child refuse to obey court order
Child is taken to JDC for violation of court order and referred to juvenile court under Title 3 TFC

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APPENDIX F

Survey Form

Survey

1. How long have you been involved working with children and families?

1-2 years 3-5 years 6-9 years 10-? years

2. Do you feel that your opinion was considered when trying to determine additional ways to access runaway youth into the STAR program?

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

4. How would you respond to the statement " going into the courts to access the multiple runners(the bulk of these children do not use our services) can increase the number of clients using the STAR program."

agree disagree uncertain

5. How would you respond to the statement," Having groups that teach life skills such as conflict resolution, anger management, good decision making, etc, can help to increase the numbers of runners that enter our program?

agree disagree uncertain

6. How would you respond to the statement " Open lines of communications between the STAR program and other agencies that deal with children will help to resolve difficulties encountered with these runaway youth, thus helping the program to stabilize and effectively continue to provide services to runaway youth who access the STAR program.

[illegible]